

No. 56.

THE RAILWAY GUIDE.

My Dear Friend:—You have reached the station—paid down your fare—received your ticket—deposited your luggage—taken your seat—and in brief and rapid succession the bell is rung—the signal is given—the train is off—the station is out of sight—and by one of the mightiest agencies, and without any effort of your own, you are speeding forward rapidly on your journey. Perhaps you have brought no book along with you to take up when the conversation flags, or you are going on some melancholy errand which makes the heart sad, or you have no travelling companion beside you to relieve the tedium of the journey ; or, if there be smiling faces and joyous hearts around you, you may still feel as if you were far away from the gladsome hearth, and the heart within you may feel solitary and alone.

Well then, dear friend, I have been sent to converse with you by the way, and peradventure to make the journey lightsome ; and as it is the habit of the oldest and most experienced travellers to accommodate themselves to their circumstances, and to make the most of the companions whom they fall in with upon the journey, I am inclined to hope that, with the frankness and the familiarity of an obliging and a kind-hearted traveller, you will not refuse to hold with me a few minutes

converse, overlooking the manner in which I have been introduced to your acquaintance, in consideration of the importance of the information which I have to communicate; and should you follow the directions of your guide, you will come, not the less rapidly, and I trust with a richer treasure and a happier heart, to the termination of your journey.

Perhaps you might think it very abrupt, and somewhat rude upon my part, did I proceed directly, or in plain words, to ask you, Whither are you going? What is the errand upon which you are journeying? Where is the terminus at which you are to stop? Are there any friends to be waiting for your arrival? Are you on your way to a happy home? But stop a little. I am not going to tax your confidence, or to abuse the familiarity of our first interview, by insisting on an answer to questions such as these. But did the thought never occur to you, that there is another journey on which you have set out, and on which perhaps you have already made great progress, and which even now may be drawing to its close? Yes, dear friend, you are booked for eternity; and whatever be the train by which you are travelling, you are moving forward as with the speed of lightning, passing station after station, leaving milestone after milestone, and coming nearer and nearer to the last great terminus. And what is that? It is heaven, or else it is hell. But which of the two? That is the solemn question which it behooves you to consider. There is an up-train, and there is a down-train. They belong to different companies. They are occupied by separate parties. They are going to different places. The up-train is moving forward on the ascending path that terminates in heaven; and there are few comparatively that are going that way: for

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the path is somewhat difficult, and the radiant land to which it leads is far off, and undiscernible by the eye of sense. The down-train is going in an opposite direction, and is making swift progress in the path that leads to the gates of hell; and many there be that are going that way. For the path is very easy, and it lies through a land of light and of voluptuousness, and of song and of revelry.

By one or other of these trains you are now travelling. There is no intermediate line. If you are not on the path that is leading you to heaven, you are at this moment on the path that is leading you to hell.

But I take it for granted that you have some wish to escape from the miseries of the one state, and to be brought at last to the secure and tranquil enjoyments of the other. But if it be so, and if the wish is ever to be realized, there are some directions which I am anxious to press upon your attention, and which it is necessary for you to observe.

The first thing which you have to do, ere setting out upon your journey, is to go to the station, and there you must obtain a ticket, and for that ticket you have to pay a certain price. And when you have got your ticket, you can take your place in the railway carriage, and in the course of a brief interval the train moves off, and you are conveyed onward, and onward, and onward, till you come to the end of your journey.

In like manner, if you are really anxious to find your way into heaven, the first thing is to secure a place in a conveyance that will carry you there. The first thing is to obtain a ticket that will give you a right to pass through the gates into the city. Now, that is what is placed within your reach. You may obtain it even without money and without price. If you really wish

it you may get it for nothing. You may get it for the asking. You have merely to open your hand to receive it. That is the case with the train which conveys passengers to heaven. But it is the case with no other train. If you go by any of the innumerable trains that are moving in the direction of hell, you must pay down an enormous price. You must give your substance, your labor, your time, your strength, your bodies, your souls. You must pay down everything that you have, and all that you will receive in return will be the payment, in due time, of the wages of death — death temporal—death spiritual—death eternal !

But if, on the other hand, you really wish to be conveyed to heaven, you have nothing to pay at all. If you are willing to receive it, you may obtain the right just now, and you may obtain it for nothing. And how is this? It is just because the price has been already paid. It has not been paid by you, and it never can be paid by you. You have nothing to pay it with. You cannot buy it with your money. You cannot buy it with your tears. You cannot buy it with your prayers. You cannot buy it with your promises. You cannot buy it with your virtuous actions. You cannot buy it even with your faith. And besides, you are not required to buy it. It is bought already. Christ, the Son of God, hath purchased it, and that not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood. And having purchased it, and obtained the right into his own possession, and with his own hand opened the gates of the kingdom of heaven, he invites you, whosoever thou art, and whatsoever be thy station, and whithersoever thou art going, to come unto Him ; and coming unto Him just as you are, He will take the entire charge of you, and of all that belongs to you—

leading you into the way of salvation—setting an open door before you—and admitting you, as it were, into the train which He himself will conduct into everlasting glory.

The second direction which I have to offer is this: you must come at the right time, when Christ himself is calling for you. And when is that? Never more urgently than at the present time; or, if you are young, in the days of your youth. For he says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." And he makes the appeal, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, 'My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?'" And He intimates, moreover, for your encouragement, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Hence a vast deal may depend on your listening to the Saviour's voice just now, and coming to Him in right earnest, and without a moment's delay.

I have often been at the railway station when the trains were about to start, but I have seldom been there without seeing some one who was too late. I recollect well the case of one man. He seemed to be a rich man, for he had several servants and a great deal of luggage. He arrived in great haste, and in a state apparently of the deepest anxiety. But just as he reached the station the bell was rung and the door was shut. Nevertheless, he hastened through the crowd, and knocked at the door with loud and vehement importunity. But it was of no use. Though he had money sufficient for the purchase of a thousand tickets, and though the most important interests might be dependent on his journey, still not the slightest attention was paid to his importunity. He was beyond the specified time, and, therefore, he was left standing without; and straightway the train was off and out of sight.

Take care that it be not so with you. The door is now open, and all things are made ready, and Christ himself is inviting you to enter in; and if you listen to His voice, and close with the generous offer which He makes to you, He will take you under the wings of His own protection, and bring you ere long to the end of your faith, even to the salvation of your soul.

But it is the strong tendency of human nature to delay, and that tendency is greatly strengthened by the temptations of that great adversary who goeth continually about, trying first of all to deceive, and thereby eventually to destroy you. The temptation which he presents to the young is just this: He says, "it is too soon. Time enough for you to be listening to the Saviour's voice; time enough for you to be thinking about the way of salvation; time enough for you to be enquiring about the train which conducts the soul into heaven. The bright and the beautiful world is all before you. The well-springs of life are overflowing with the freshness of their first emotions, and all around you is invested with an air of fascination and of joy. Rejoice then, O young man, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and when the days of thy youth are gone, and dark clouds are gathering around you, and the enjoyments of this bright world are exhausted, and the infirmities of old age are creeping upon you, it may then be well for you to seek for another portion, or to be journeying onward to a better land."

Beware, however, of yielding to that temptation. For if you do, and thereby allow the seasonable opportunity to escape, and continue day after day to procrastinate, till at length you are overtaken with the infirmities of declining years, and are standing upon the very brink of the grave, what then will be the result? Will the

tempter now tell you that it is too soon? No such thing. He will come to you in the spirit of mockery and of scorn, and he will tell you it is too late. You ought to have attended to these things before; attended to them in the days of your youth; attended to them when the voice of the Saviour was urgently addressing you. But it is hopeless now. The day of grace is past. The door of hope is shut. The warning bell is rung. The train is already off and out of reach; and there is nothing for you but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary.

The following address, by Mrs. P. P. Merrill, was taken down by her brother, as it fell from her dying lips, the Sabbath week before her death; and was read at her funeral, to a large congregation:

"My dear impenitent friends, I have a few words to say to you, by way of warning. I was once suddenly called to visit a sick brother. My husband could not accompany me. But the most careful arrangements were made that I should not be exposed, with my babe, to any hardship or the evening air. I took the train. All went right till after quietly sitting through a long delay of the train at a certain station. Just as the train was starting, I arose, and showing my card to a conductor, inquired if the next stopping-place would be where I must get out. Why, said he, *this is the place*. You should have got out *here*. There had been some slight misunderstanding with those who had made the arrangements, and our careful plans were all thwarted. I saw it at once. My whole frame was agitated. Possibly I might have attempted to run down the steps, had not the conductor prevented. Said I, *I can't go on! I can't go on!* My babe in my arms. We shall be out in the

evening air. My brother will die before I can see him. The man laid his hand on my shoulder ; but you *must*, said he. I saw that I must. Well, what shall I do ? You can go on to the next station and stop for the return train, or keep the c  rriage, go on to the end of the line, and return in it. I chose the latter. By the favor of Providence and the kindness of the conductor, I arrived safely that night at the home of a sister, though this was not the place I intended to stop at. To my surprise, I found my baggage there. A coachman had recognised the baggage as belonging to the relatives of my sister's family, and carried it there, telling them he guessed I was on the way.

"I have now a comparison to make. The impenitent sinner makes all his arrangements carefully for this world ; but, laboring under one mistake, he sits quietly enjoying himself, not recognising the place where he should leave the pleasures of the world, till by some slight occurrence, or perhaps sudden illness or accident, he perceives that he has been quiet when he should have been bestirring himself. Like me, he is thrown into the greatest agitation. I have often drawn the comparison in my own mind. He cries, *I cannot go*. God lays His hand upon him, and says, but you *must*. He sees that he has been quiet too long. In his agitation, crying, *I cannot go*, he is hurried away with more than the speed of the train from the spot where he might have left the ways of sin.

"But there are some points of *contrast* also. *I* could take a return train and in part retrieve my misfortune. But, my friends, remember there is *no back train from Perdition ; no back train from Perdition*. Oh, if there were, how should we see it loaded down, hurrying back into this world of misery ! The rich man would be on.

Many, whom we little thought to have gone that way, would be there. But I forbear. You must imagine for yourselves."

The third direction which we tender is this: that when you listen to the Saviour's voice, and enter on the way of salvation, you must trust in Him till the very end of your journey, casting upon Him all your cares, and all your burdens, and all your fears.

There are many who, when they travel by a railway, keep themselves perpetually in a state of anxiety and alarm, either troubling themselves about the safety of their luggage or starting up and looking out at the windows at the slightest noise which they hear; whereas, if they would just sit still, leaving everything with perfect confidence to the management of the conductor, they would not only be conveyed with equal safety, but would also be delivered from a great deal of unnecessary alarm.

So, in like manner, when you put yourself under the guidance of Christ, it will tend greatly to your own comfort, and to the felicity of your journey, if you have just the confidence to leave everything to be entirely managed by Himself, believing that his presence is always with you; that the machinery is entirely under his own control; that nothing can escape the notice of His all-searching eye; and that He will assuredly conduct you by His mighty power, through faith, unto everlasting life.

Of this we were once furnished with an impressive illustration in the case of a little child. When she first set out upon her journey she was light-hearted and very happy, for the train was passing through a beautiful country, enriched with fine green fields, and adorned with magnificent mansions, and intersected with tran-

quill rivers of living water. But ere long the carriage passed into a dark tunnel. The light of day was completely extinguished; and amid the oppressive gloom, and the condensed smoke of the engine, and the strange noise of the revolving wheels, the heart of the little child was filled with terror and alarm. But her father took her into his arms; laid her head gently upon his bosom; and whispered into her ear, "Don't be afraid; I am here; I'll take care of you." And what was the result? The fears of the little child were almost instantly dispelled. The whole burden of her anxiety was lifted from her own heart, and transferred to the bosom of a tender and affectionate father.

Now, just as this little child did in regard to an earthly parent, so you are invited to do in regard to Christ; and in that case all will be well. Sometimes the lines will fall to you in pleasant places, and enchanting prospects will regale you on every side, while, at the various stations which you pass, you will be furnished with the very refreshment that is most suited to your taste—with the hidden manna, the enduring substance, the bread of life, the living water, the wine of Lebanon. But sometimes it may be otherwise: there may be difficulties, there may be dangers in the journey. The windows of heaven may be opened, the raging tempests may be let loose, the firmament may be covered with dark clouds, the floods underneath may lift up their voice and make a mighty noise, and amid the conflict of the elements, the comfort of your journey may be sensibly diminished; and besides all this, ere you come to the end of your journey, you may have to pass through some of those damp and dismal tunnels where the light fades away gradually from behind, till at last it becomes totally dark, arresting the current of the most cheerful

conversation, and, amid the solemn silence, forcibly suggesting the idea of the dark valley of the shadow of death. But observe that, even in the longest and the gloomiest of these tunnels, there are little openings cut through the flinty rocks overhead, through which gleams of celestial light travel down, thereby giving sensible intimation of a world of glory that is above. And observe still farther that, when these gleams of light from the upper world are wanting, and all around seems to be utterly dark, there is yet another arrangement that ministers to the comfort of the traveller. And what is that? A little lamp is attached to the roof of the carriage, and on some of the lines this lamp is almost always burning. And though amid the bright sunshine a superficial observer might almost fail to perceive it, yet, when the train passes through a dark tunnel, or when the shadows of the night come down, the little lamps fills the whole carriage with the lustre of a clear light; and thus, though there be darkness without, it is like a little Goshen within.

So it is with the Word of the Divine Redeemer—with the Bible. That Word is like a light unto our feet, like a lamp unto our path. Always it is shedding its light around us. But amid the sunshine of an unclouded prosperity we may scarcely be able to discern it, or we may think, perhaps, that we can almost do without it. But when the light of the outer world fades away, and the soul passes through the dark valley of the shadow of death, it shines forth with a lustre that is made visible by the darkness that is around. And when, by means of this shining light, you can discern, as in the case of the little child, that the arms of a Father are round about and underneath you, you may then escape from the burden of all your anxieties, and

amid the solemn darkness be enabled to exclaim, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."

The last thing to which I crave your attention is the terminus, or what takes place at the end of the journey. When the passengers get thus far, they have to present their tickets to show that the fare has been paid. When this is done, they all leave the railway carriages, and, landing upon the same platform, they pass through the same gate into the city, to which they have been travelling. At the time they were journeying, they were in a measure separated from one another, some of them being in the first class carriages, some of them in the second, and some of them in the third. They could not all see one another face to face, nor hold converse with each other by the way. There were something like walls of separation between them, and perhaps they did not know who those were who were sitting near to them in the next compartment of the same carriage. Still they were all journeying by the same train, and passing through the same district of country, and placed under the superintendence of the same conductor, and carried forward by the same moving power, and going, peradventure, to the same place; and when they leave the train they all mingle together, the rich as well as the poor, the first class passengers as well as the second, and enter by the same gate into the same city.

So it will be with you if you are travelling to heaven. The whole members of God's blessed family may not be along with you. In the carriage that conveys you, there may be but two out of the same city, or one out of the same family; and the carriages in the same train may be so distant in themselves, or so separated from one

another, that you may have no intercourse with very many who are travelling by the same way, and going to the same place. But when you come to the end of your journey, and pass through the gates into the city, you will meet with the whole family of the redeemed. Every one of them shall be there. The rich and the poor, the young and the old, the bond and the free; all who have been bought by the blood of Christ, every one for whom the price has been paid. And the city where they are to dwell for ever, and where they are never more to be separated, is one of vast grandeur and magnificence. The outer gates of it are composed of massive and resplendent pearls, signifying, by their priceless value, and their purity undefiled, that the city into which they lead is a place that is designed for the habitation of saints—"an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that never fadeth away." The walls of it are constructed out of the jasper, or the diamond, the hardest, the most brilliant, the most indestructible of all the precious stones; and these are walls which the ravages of time can never waste away, and which the artillery of hell can never break down. Even the streets of the city are paved with transparent gold, and all illuminated with the glory of God and of the Lamb, while there are millions of splendid and magnificent mansions, prepared by Christ for his believing people, who are all clothed in white attire, with bright crowns upon their heads, and golden harps in their hands, walking in an air of eternal glory, sounding forth the praises of the Divine Redeemer, who hath washed them in his blood, and rejoicing everlastingly in a land of the purest delight, where there is no sickness, and no sorrow, and no sin, and no death.

O then, my dear friend, let it be your earnest prayer,

that the Spirit of Almighty God may touch your heart with the grace of the Divine Redeemer, that, coming unto Him in right earnest, and without any further delay, He may take you entirely under his own charge, and guide you into the way of salvation, and conduct you at last through the gates into the splendors of that glorious city, where the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead you unto fountains of living waters, and "where God himself shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."

“Jesus said unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” JOHN xiv, 6.

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon Him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” ISAIAH lv, 6, 7.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.” MATT. vii, 13.

“When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know not whence ye are.” LUKE xiii, 25.

“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” PROV. i, 24-28.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.” ISAIAH lv, 1.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” REV. xxii, 17.

“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” REV. xxii, 14.